



CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD

Meeting Minutes #704

June 15, 2007



Chairman Vernon Chong
Randal Bressette, Vice Chairman
Tom Moran, Board Member

Jake I. Alarid, Board Member
Alice Astafan, Board Member
Colin Shadell, Board Member

The California Veterans Board met at the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, Los Angeles, California at 9:00 AM

ROLL CALL

Present: Vernon Chong, Chairman, Randal Bressette, Vice-Chairman, Member, Alice Astafan, Member, Thomas Moran, Member, Colin Shadell, Member, Jake Alarid, Member
Chairman Chong presided

OPENING CEREMONIES

- A) INVOCATION**
- B) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

WELCOMING REMARKS/INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Chong welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. The Chairman then introduced the members of the Board and provided background on each Board member. He then introduced Mr. Thomas Johnson, the Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs.

Secretary Johnson welcomed the group and introduced his staff, Undersecretary Roger Brautigan, Chief Legal Counsel Rob Wilson, Deputy Secretary of Communications, J.P. Tremblay, Deputy of Veterans Homes Division Bill Parente, Louis Koff, Administrator Barstow Veterans Home, and Los Angeles Veterans Services Veterans' Claims Representative, Bill McClure.

Chairman Chong introduced Chuck Dorman, Director of the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, who gave an update on the latest events of the System.

MINUTES

Executive Officer, Bonnie Kelly

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the minutes of the previous meeting held April 12-13, 2007. Board member Bressette moved to approve April 12-13, 2007 minutes. Board member Moran seconded.
Motion unanimously approved and carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Anthony Allman
Alfred Lugo, American GI Forum

OLD BUSINESS

A. Proposed Policy C-14 – Non Veteran Spouses Remaining as Residents of Homes

Chairman Chong advised that this policy helps to clarify the status of a non-veteran spouse.

Member Shadell moved to approve Policy C-14, and Member Bressette seconded.

B. Board Reorganization Policy

Member Bressette presented a proposed policy regarding the selection of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Board. Member Bressette moved to have this policy submitted to the Policies and Procedures Committee for review and formatting for the Board to take official action at our next meeting. Member Alarid seconded the motion.

DEPARTMENT FORUM

A. Department Update

Secretary Johnson updated the Board on the following:

- **Barstow Veterans Home:** The Budget this year will allow for the Home to re-open the skilled nursing unit. Administrator Koff and his staff, along with the City of Barstow and the Victor Valley College, are working to restore the nursing program which was closed down several years ago by bringing back a satellite program. The Barstow home is hosting some of the classes. An emergency need was declared to repair the sidewalks, and the emergency generator and HVAC system is also part of the budget. The census continues to go up at the Home, and the stability of the staff is enabling us to make progress.
- **Yountville Veterans Home:** There is additional money in the budget for deferred maintenance and additional staff, subject to approval by the Legislature.

The Halfway Home Grant for \$5.622 Million was received. This program will begin this Summer and be focused on the younger returning Veterans and the transition time they may need for mental health services, counseling and community follow-up.

The drawings for the Membership Services Building are required to be completed by July 15, which will be met by the Department.

The Alzheimer's Memory Care Unit will be having their dedication on July 11.

- **Chula Vista Veterans Home**
The bid has been received and approved for the emergency contract to repair the showers.
- **Groundbreakings for new homes**
The Ventura and Lancaster groundbreaking events has taken place with much support. The groundbreaking for West Los Angeles is scheduled for July 6th with both Governor Schwarzenegger and Secretary Nicholson both attending.

- **National News**

The Military Construction Veterans Affairs Sub-Committee approved \$165 Million for the Grant Program.

- **Statewide News**

Due to the complex site of West Los Angeles, the bid came in well above the estimate. As a result, the total \$162 Million in lease revenue money, plus the \$31 Million was not enough to build all of the homes based on our costs. Senator Aanestad put in a bill, SB 630 which would add an additional \$30 Million Dollars more, which we believe will be sufficient to build all five homes.

- **CalVet Loan Program**

We have seen a great response from the Congressional Delegation on HR 551. 85% has now signed on as a co-sponsor, which is higher than any bill in the past. Undersecretary Brautigan led our delegation to Washington to sell our bonds. We have a good credit rating of AA-, and have reduced our expenses by 30%.

- **CDVA Staff**

Sheryl Schmidt is the new Deputy Director of Veterans Services, and we have a new Deputy Secretary for Women and Minority Affairs, Barbara Ward.

- **Outreach**

The job fairs are going great and we are in partnership with EDD. The next one is coming up in Long Beach on November 13. We've done six and have four more. We have other outreach activities occurring next year. We'll be having some new public service announcements in September, and redoing the website to add new educational links, with a complete revamp in January.

The Department, for the first time, will be meeting the Governor's goal of 3% for the Disabled Veterans' Business Enterprises.

This year, subject to the passage of the budget, will provide opportunities to make improvements. Information systems refresh dollars that will help us bring a medical record that is electronically based that has integration with the pharmacy, minimize forms, and transfer of information. It is hoped that when the Governor and Secretary Nicholson get together on July 6, they will discuss West Los Angeles as a pilot project for integrating the state veterans' homes with the U.S. veterans' business system. There is also money for some salary increases for our staff.

B. Financial Policy for Homes

Bill Parente explained the financial policy for admittance to the homes.

C. Significant Legal Matters

D. Chevron v. Alcoholic Beverage Control Appeals Board

Rob Wilson discussed the impact of a March 29, 2007 appellate court decision regarding Board counsel and the appeals process formerly used by the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC)Board.

NEW BUSINESS

A) Committee Reports

Member Bressette advised that the Legislative Committee, along with the Executive Officer and JP Tremblay, met with Senate and Assembly members on April 30 and May 1 for a brief meet and greet.

B) Resolution to Support California Educational Grant (GI Bill) for California Iraq Veterans

Member Alarid read a resolution to support the GI Bill. He will work with JP Tremblay, Mr. Westlin?, and Member Bressette for further research to finalize the draft for presentation to the Board at a future meeting.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

A) SB 630 (Aanestad)

Member Bressette requested the support of the Board for SB 630. The Legislative Committee supports the drafting of a letter for the Chairman to sign in support of SB 630 to members of the Assembly.

B) SB 287 (Denham)

This is currently a watch bill.

COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:45 AM.